

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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July 14, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Robert L. Sanson

THROUGH: K. Wayne Smith

SUBJECT: Pacification

While I did not attempt to make an appraisal of the pacification situation, spurred by the poor performance of Jacobson I was able to obtain some useful views on pacification from:

- Ev Bumgardner
- Dave Elliott

-- a one-half day trip to the Delta villages where I did research three to four years ago and Larry Lynn and I visited eighteen months ago.

Colby's Replacement

Before I review these sources, the issue of Colby's replacement has generated some interesting responses:

-- Several Mission and DOD sources have contacted me to urge strongly that Joe Mendenhall, Ambassador Sullivan's candidate, not be given the job. All of these people have worked with Mendenhall and believe he is definitely not the man for the job. (Mendenhall reportedly has been recalled from an overseas inspection trip by State.)

-- Cooper is stretched very thin in the economic area, in part because he does not rank Mossler and spends an inordinate amount of time on bureaucratic problems. The economic issues are becoming very important and a good case could be made for elevating Cooper to deal with these alone. This would permit him to work at the highest levels with the GVN where in my judgment he would be much more effective than Berger.

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If Cooper were to handle both economics and pacification he would need a strong deputy for pacification. One argument for such a dual role is that CORDs is turning more towards civil development. Another is that corruption, after peace the major political issue now, has to be dealt with by freeing the economy and by exerting U.S. pressure through the advisory system. Cooper would be good on these issues.

-- Bumgardner listed Vann as ideal for the job and Komer as a second best. (Bumgardner was not very enthusiastic about General Cushman's performance in the Delta where in Bumgardner's judgment he has been "militarizing" the pacification program since Vann departed.

I fear that the issue of Colby's replacement has been given too little thought outside the Komer "old boy" network. We need a list of about ten candidates, including several high-ranking FSOs and some military officers, from which a choice can be made.

Pacification Assessment

Bumgardner made the following points:

-- The issue of reallocating RF-PF forces from low to high threat areas is not being given adequate attention by the GVN. Thieu must be pressed hard on this. There is no reason to increase RVNAF above 1.1 million men if reallocations are made. Two divisions could be freed from MRs 3 and 4 if RF-PF reallocations are made.

-- Reallocations to central Vietnam can be made by taking from two Delta divisions a regiment of recruits from central Vietnam. These would be moved to MRs 1 and 2 and locally recruited personnel added.

-- The GVN stands a good chance of holding South Vietnam although there will be losses in security, particularly in MRs 1 and 2.

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-- The GVN needs a shock to get moving again in pacification. We should set a fixed date for total U.S. withdrawals -- e.g. the end of 1972.

-- We can get our tactical aircraft out of South Vietnam. What the South Vietnamese really need is helicopter gunship support.

-- Thieu will win the Presidential election. His control of the administrative apparatus permits him to mobilize support for the candidates he favors. The district chief will identify the pro-Thieu candidates, travel with them to the villages and use the Phuonh Huong program and other administrative instruments to intimidate rivals. Village Chiefs will see clearly that to get ahead or avoid being set back they must deliver the village vote for Thieu. The main threat to Thieu is the peace sentiment and it would take a major pre-election VC offensive. Bumgardner does not anticipate for this to blossom in a way that would defeat Thieu.

-- USIA should not be allowed to pull out of South Vietnam.

-- Despite Bumgardner's previous opposition to land reform, he does not believe it has hurt Thieu and it may benefit him in the long run. The GVN's failure to pay the landlords is a principal cause of the recent PAAS survey finding that 40 percent of tenants are still paying rent even though the law does not require them to do so.

-- Phuonh Huong is not working as an anti-VCI measure. It is too near the end of the war in many people's judgment for them to finger the VCI. We oversold the 1968 Hue experience.

-- The South Vietnamese have begun grading a selected number of secure districts for HES. They appear to be making accurate assessments.

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Dinh Tuong as Seen by Elliott and Sansom

As you may know, Dave Elliott is engaged in a six months' project to update his earlier work on Dinh Tuong province. I also worked in two districts in Dinh Tuong and spent one-half day there.

The different conditions Elliott and I found are instructive in several respects:

-- Dinh Tuong is a key Delta province. If the GVN succeeds in Dinh Tuong it is a good bet it will succeed in the Delta.

-- One always finds contradictory evidence in Vietnam. Often the views of the beholder are confirmed.

-- Elliott's efforts are concentrated in the VC stronghold areas of southern and central Dinh Tuong while the districts I visited in eastern Dinh Tuong are now secure by most measures.

-- Elliott has spent several months on his effort. I was in Dinh Tuong for one-half day.

According to Dave Elliott, the following conditions exist in the areas he is studying:

-- the GVN has expanded security greatly and the VC military forces are defeated.

-- the VC political apparatus is still intact and secure in isolated orchard fortresses. Forced movement of villagers has not enabled the GVN to burn out the VCI and is politically costly to the GVN.

-- the GVN is very corrupt and politically inept. The Phuong Huong program is used to purge villages of opponents to Thieu and obstacles to corruption.

-- whereas the VC still have support dating from their earlier land reform program and anti-French posture, the political ineptitude of the GVN is the best VC program.

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-- if the GVN suffers a major defeat, e.g. in MRs 1 or 2 the VC cause will regain momentum and recruitment, the principal obstacle to a VC military capability, will pick up.

My discussions with Vietnamese friends in the two districts revealed the following:

-- Security is excellent. Some villages haven't seen the VC in two years.

-- The economy is prospering as never before.

-- RF-PF performance, which one family told Larry Lynn and I 18 months ago had caused it to turn against the GVN, was cited by this same family as greatly improved. Ironically this improvement is due to the performance of the RF-PF training center commander in the District, who is one of Dave Elliott's former interviewers.

-- The overwhelming preponderance of GVN forces was cited as assurance that the VC could not re-build.

-- One landlord family, when asked who would win the election, replied that President Thieu would although they would not vote. The reason given was that "the poor people control this village now because of Thieu's land reform program. The landed and rich classes have no influence."

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